

Lowestoft Town Council

Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

Via Video Meeting
16:45 on 11 March 2021

MINUTES

Video meeting participants: Cllrs Neil Coleby, Alan Green, Paul Page, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce (Chair) and John Pitts

Also participating: Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

142. Welcome

Councillors and members of the public were reminded of the right to report and the application of the video meeting protocol, and the meeting was welcomed.

143. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr David Youngman. Cllr John Pitts had advised he would need to leave the meeting at 18:00. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

144. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

145. Receipt of any comments and noting that the minutes of the meeting of 11 February 2021 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

The draft minutes were noted.

146. Advance comments from the public on any matters on this agenda

Cllr Taylor had submitted a statement in objecting to the proposal from the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee at agenda item 149.2b. A separate public comment had been received in objection to agenda item 150.2 and suggested that laptops should only be purchased for those Councillors who require one.

147. Budget:

147.1. Monitoring the budget for 2020 – 2021 – There have been recent incidents of trees on Town Council land being cut down illegally. The Council will now have the cost of reinstatement and potential improvements to the area and signage to consider. Environmental crimes are reported to the Police, but in any absence of a criminal prosecution the Council may wish to pursue private or civil prosecution. There is provision in the 2021 – 2022 budget of £25,000 for expenditure related to the Council's climate emergency declaration, and separate budget provision for planting. These incidents may affect how the Council wishes to budget going forward. It was suggested that the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee should consider the Town Council's legal budget at its meeting in April. The Sub-Committee would like an update on what remains unused from this year's budget so it can consider the adequacy of future provision.

147.2. Bank reconciliations – Cllr Page has checked January's bank reconciliation. February's is being prepared and will be sent to the appropriate Councillors. Cllrs Green and Pearce will shortly be signing relevant legal papers and payment records relating to the audit. There will be work for the Internal Controller to complete after the end of the financial year.

148. Payments:

148.1. The income and expenditure reports for February 2021 and March 2021 to date, including payments made under delegated authority (see schedules) – The income and expenditure reports were noted as follows:

February income

Date	Received from	Description	Amount
1 February 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
Via Video Meeting
16:45 on 11 March 2021

8 February 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£18.50
15 February 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
17 February 2021	East Suffolk Council	S106 for Noticeboards	£2,028
19 February 2021	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£1,562.50
22 February 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
22 February 2021	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£213.16
23 February 2021	HMRC	VAT Return Q3 2020-2021	£37,602.12
24 February 2021	East Suffolk Norse	Whitton Green money	£18,506 + £3,701.20 VAT = £22,207.20
24 February 2021	East Suffolk Norse	Belle Vue Park Cemetery income	£1,962.50 + £392.50 VAT = £2,355

February expenditure

Date	Payment to	Description	Amount
4 February 2021	Suffolk Pension Fund	Pension January 2021	£4,450.70
9 February 2021	Land Registry	Land Registry Search	£6
12 February 2021	Sandy Lane Nursery	Trees	£108 + £21.60 VAT = £129.60
12 February 2021	Trevor Brown	Internal Audit	£250
12 February 2021	Archant	Lowestoft Journal Adverts	£85 + £17 VAT = £102
12 February 2021	Rialtas	Finance Software	£59 + £11.80 VAT = £70.80
12 February 2021	O.A. Chapman & Son Ltd	RICS valuation surveys for Asset Register	£4,750 + £950 VAT = £5,700
12 February 2021	Nicholsons Solicitors	Legal Advice	£495 + £99 VAT = £594
12 February 2021	Nicholsons Solicitors	Legal Advice	£1079.40 + £209.88 VAT = £1,289.28
12 February 2021	Joshua Freemantle	HMD Video	£175
12 February 2021	Abrehart Ecology Ltd	Ecological and Biodiversity Pond Surveys	£1,863 + £372.60 VAT = £2,235.60
12 February 2021	Moss King	Town Hall Business Plan Development Project (to be paid for using AHF grant)	£9,140
12 February 2021	Anglian Water	Normanston Water	£127.01
12 February 2021	East Coast Community Healthcare	Replacement Laptop	£675.75 + £135.15 VAT = £810.90
12 February 2021	Ricoh	Printer Hire	£252.82 + £50.57 = £303.39
12 February 2021	Nick Walker Thatching	Belle Vue Park Lodge Repairs	£950
12 February 2021	East Point Business	IT Service Charge	£12,924.00 +

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
Via Video Meeting
16:45 on 11 March 2021

	Services	01/10/2018 to 30/09/2019	£2,584.80 VAT = £15,508.80
12 February 2021	East Point Business Services	IT Service Charge 01/10/2019 to 30/09/2020	£12,924.00 + £2,584.80 VAT = £15,508.80
12 February 2021	East Point Business Services	IT Service Charge 01/10/2020 to 31/12/2020	£3,231.00 + £646.20 VAT = £3,877.20
12 February 2021	East Point Business Services	IT Service Charge 01/01/2021 to 31/03/2021	£3,231.00 + £646.20 VAT = £3,877.20
15 February 2021	Gazprom Energy	Town Hall Gas	£45.70
16 February 2021	Lloyds Bank	Credit Card Charges	£20.39
18 February 2021	NPower	Electricity Charges	£226.67
18 February 2021	Need2Store Ltd	Civic Artefact Storage	£200 + £40 VAT = £240
19 February 2021	NPower	Electricity Charges	£698.54
19 February 2021	HMRC	PAYE January 2021	£4,228.61
22 February 2021	NPower	Electricity Charges	£122.62
23 February 2021	Salaries	Salaries February 2021	£10,273.21
23 February 2021	Ecolab Ltd	Marina Theatre works	£7,851.60 + £1,570.32 VAT = £9,421.92
24 February 2021	East Suffolk Norse	Partnership Charge March 2021	£36,525 + £7,305 VAT = £43,830

148.2. Any payments for approval (see schedule) – There were no payments for approval in addition to any already specified on the agenda.

148.3. Applications made under the COVID-19 Grant Awarding Policy – There had been no new applications since the last meeting. Cllr Pearce had received an enquiry following the Lowestoft and Northern Parishes Community Partnership meeting and an application has been sent form.

149. Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee

149.1. Receipt of the draft minutes from the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee meeting of 17 February 2021 – The draft minutes were noted. The Clerk had prepared a meeting paper for the Sub-Committee detailing which budgets would be appropriate for delegation to other Committees and Sub-Committees. It is understood that a formal recommendation to proceed with the delegations as per the meeting paper was put forward, but has not been reflected in the minutes or on this agenda. It is also understood a recommendation was put forward that draft agendas should be shared with Committee and Sub-Committee Chairs at least twenty four hours prior to them being published, but officers have provided assurances that this can be done administratively anyway. Financial delegations to the Events and Communications Sub-Committee and the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee were discussed specifically and officers will check the specific recommendations which arose from the meeting and ensure an appropriate item is added to April's Finance and Governance Committee agenda for this to be considered, whether a formal recommendation was forthcoming from the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee or not, as it appears the intention was to recommend the delegations as suggested in the meeting paper for approval. Committee members were asked to email any further items relating to the review of Committee and Sub-Committee structures and Terms of Reference to the Committee Clerk for inclusion on the agenda.

149.2. The following recommendations from the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee: - It

Lowestoft Town Council

Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

Via Video Meeting
16:45 on 11 March 2021

- was clarified that, if approved, these would all take effect from the Annual Meeting in May.
- 149.2a. For the quorum of the Town Council's Committees to be four Councillors and the quorum of the Town Council's Sub-Committees to be three Councillors. If approved this should take effect from the Annual Meeting in May and should be appropriately reflected in the Standing Orders and Terms of Reference – This would affect the Climate Emergency Committee and Community Safety Committee which currently have a quorum of three. Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to Full Council to approve this recommendation from the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.
- 149.2b. For the Deputy Mayor to have automatic membership and full voting rights on the Town Council's Committees and Sub-Committees, as the Mayor currently does – The statement from Cllr Taylor in objection to this recommendation was read out. Cllr Pearce had responded via email to Cllr Taylor regarding the points raised in her statement and this was read out. The Council could consider removing this privilege from the Mayor if it were legally able to do so. The Mayor is however expected to attend meetings with an open mind and recently has often been called upon to attend meetings to ensure they are quorate. It is hoped more Councillors can be encouraged to join Committees and Sub-Committees to avoid this issue. A Working Group has been established to review the Council's Equality Policy and practices and it is hoped the recommendations arising from their findings will encourage more Councillors to be involved more with Committees and Sub-Committees. This proposal was not put forward to remedy the issue of meetings being inquorate, or as an attempt to influence voting, but to ensure the Deputy Mayor has a depth of knowledge of the Committees and Sub-Committees if the Mayor were ever unexpectedly absent for a period of time. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to grant ex-officio membership to the Deputy Mayor to all of the Town Council's Committees and Sub-Committees, initially with no voting rights unless the Deputy Mayor makes a conscious decision to join as a member. If approved, this position is to be reviewed again at end of the 2021 - 2022 civic year. The recommendation was seconded by Cllr Page. Five Councillors voted in favour and one Councillor abstained from the vote. The Mayor's automatic membership to Committees and Sub-Committees with full voting rights is in the Terms of Reference document but is not in Standing Orders. The Council may wish to review this in due course.
- 149.2c. Following Full Council's approval of the Events and Communications Sub-Committee reporting to the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee rather than the Finance and Governance Committee, for a corresponding amendment to be made to AID Committee's Terms of Reference, to enable it to grant the Events and Communications Sub-Committee's delegated budget – Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to approve this recommendation from the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.
- 149.2d. Delegating the horticultural budget to the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee, and the ordering of bulbs for annual planting each year – If approved, this would include ordering bulbs and arranging ongoing maintenance, including planting, watering and mulching, which would streamline the current process. Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to Full Council to approve this recommendation from the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. Cllr Pearce proposed that, subject to approval of this recommendation, a corresponding amendment be made to the AID Committee's Terms of Reference, as the parent Committee, to enable it to delegate this budget to the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee' seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.
- 149.2e. For Committees with a delegated budget to have a per-item expenditure limit of £5,000, and not exceeding the available budget delegated to that Committee – Cllr

Lowestoft Town Council

Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

Via Video Meeting
16:45 on 11 March 2021

Coleby proposed a recommendation to Full Council to approve this recommendation from the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

149.2f. For Sub-Committees with a delegated budget to have a per-item expenditure limit of £2,500 and not exceeding the available budget delegated to that Sub-Committee – With regard to Events and Communications, there is an existing delegation to officers which may exceed this. This may be relevant to other Committees and Sub-Committees also. Regarding the previous item, Cllr Coleby proposed that the recommendation for Committees with a delegated budget to have a per-item expenditure limit of £5,000, and not exceeding the available budget delegated to that Committee does not include existing officer delegations; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. With regard to this item, Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to Full Council for Sub-Committees with a delegated budget to have a per-item expenditure limit of £2,500 and not exceeding the available budget delegated to that Sub-Committee, but this will not include existing officer delegations. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Pearce. There had been concerns raised at Full Council that approving such recommendations may result in a lack of scrutiny over the delegated budgets and expenditure from them. It was confirmed that the same level of scrutiny which currently applies will still be applicable, and the Council has robust measures in place to ensure all payments are appropriately checked and transparent. The Council is legally obliged to publish all decisions made under delegated authority, which it does. All delegations are reviewed periodically by the Council. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

149.2g. Adoption the following Town Council policies: - With the exception of the Toilet Strategy, it was agreed to take a combined vote on the policies as they have been reviewed by the Sub-Committee. The Toilet Strategy will be deferred until after the Toilet Strategy Working Group has met and reviewed it. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the policies as listed in agenda items 149.2gi – 149.2gvii; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

149.2gi Grievance Procedure

149.2gii Memory Stick Policy, including to note the agreement by Full Council to incorporate it into the existing IT, Internet, Social Media and Email Policy

149.2giii Noticeboard Protocol

149.2giv Pandemic Contingency and Recovery Policy

149.2gv Personal Use of the Telephone Policy, as amended

149.2gvi Petty Cash Policy

149.2gvii Pond Policy, as amended

149.2gviii Toilet Strategy – The Toilet Strategy Working Group will be tomorrow and will review the Strategy. In order for the Strategy to formally be considered for adoption ahead of the Annual Meeting, Cllr Coleby proposed granting delegating authority to the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee to review the Toilet Strategy at its meeting in April, taking into account any comments from the Toilet Strategy Working Group, and make any recommendations directly to Full Council in April; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

150. Other financial matters, including:

150.1. Internal controller appointments and internal control arrangements – The internal control arrangements have been reviewed and this Committee had no amendments it wished to make. The Internal Controllers will be reviewed again at the Annual Meeting. Cllr Pearce proposed continuing with the current arrangements regarding the internal controls and the Internal Controllers until the Annual Meeting; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

Cllr Page temporarily left the meeting 17:58

Lowestoft Town Council

Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

Via Video Meeting
16:45 on 11 March 2021

150.2. The purchase of laptops for all Councillors – The public comment was taken into consideration, but given the technological issues some Councillors have experienced and the election of new Councillors approaching, it may be more cost effective to purchase in bulk rather than replacing individually. If this were to proceed the tablets previously purchased would be repurposed. Most Councillors have found the tablets not fit for purpose.

Cllr Page returned 18:00

Any electronic equipment purchased would remain in the ownership of the Town Council and is not gifted to Councillors.

Cllr Pitts left the meeting 18:01

Officers are seeking quotations. Cllr Green has the details of a supplier at a reasonable cost, which he will forward to officers. Any new equipment would need to be supported by the Council's existing IT provision and security arrangements. This item will be carried forward to April's meeting.

150.3. The purchase of a replacement Cat745 Media Block at the Marina Theatre, within a maximum budget of £5,970 – This is an integral part of the system used to show films at the Theatre. The current equipment is still functioning but is no longer supported, which would cause issues if it suddenly failed. The Theatre has been provided with an offer which would save £1,000 from the price if it is accepted before 31 March. The Theatre understands that the equipment belongs to the Town Council. Based on the current usage, a more modest version of the equipment could be purchased at a lower price. The maximum budget quoted would enable purchase of a higher specification of the equipment, which would enable more flexibility for films to be saved and shown at a later date. Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the maximum budget of £5,970 to purchase the higher specification equipment (Dolby IMS 3000 playback server); seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. There are sufficient funds available in the current budget for the Marina Theatre to support the purchase in the current civic year. Upon purchase the equipment will need to be registered as a Town Council asset. It is understood that almost all of the equipment within the Theatre belongs to the Town Council but this needs to be clarified. It is understood a list has previously been provided, detailing the equipment and its anticipated lifespan. This may however not have been updated to reflect more recent purchases, such as the audio equipment purchased by the Town Council recently.

150.4. Reviewing the Town Council's insurance arrangements, including to consider taking out Ill Health Liability Insurance – This is ongoing and will be included on the Full Council agenda. The information from the Quantity Surveyors has been received, including a comprehensive list of values, which will be circulated to Councillors.

150.5. The cost of memorial lecterns for the Belle Vue Park Peace Garden and the Kensington Gardens Holocaust Memorial Garden – Six District Councillors have agreed to contribute locality funding, once the new allocations are received in April. The purchase of the lecterns, installation and associated planting should cost no more than £1,500 per site. Cllr Green proposed delegating authority to the Clerk to submit applications for locality funding to the relevant District Councillors once the new allocations are available, to support the purchase of memorial lecterns for the Belle Vue Park Peace Garden, the Kensington Gardens Holocaust Memorial Garden, installation and associated planting; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

150.6. A request for funding for a public statue on Lowestoft seafront – A paper has been circulated but specific details regarding the applicant, the funding requested and the total budget. Financial support is being requested but no further details are available at this stage. The Council would expect to receive a full proposal, with costings and details of how the Town Council's contribution would represent in the context of the overall budget, from a local organisation, as it does with all grant applications it receives. The proposal seems to be well supported so far by local people and organisations. The Clerk has contacted East Suffolk Council, who are considering how it could be progressed if appropriate.

150.7. An agreement for maintenance of The Ness (confidential) – To be discussed during the

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
Via Video Meeting
16:45 on 11 March 2021

confidential session.

151. Date of the next meeting

8 April 2021 16:45

152. Items for the next agenda and close

It was requested that an update is provided at the next meeting on the purchase of audio and recording equipment for Hamilton House, in preparation of face-to-face meetings resuming. It was also requested that enquiries be made regarding a bell for the back door after hours, to ensure that evening meetings are more accessible.

Cllr Green proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour. The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the meeting via live stream and the live stream was closed as the meeting went into confidential session. It was confirmed the meeting would end following the confidential session.

153. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

153.1. Any legal matters, including those above as required:

150.7 An agreement for maintenance of The Ness (confidential) – There was a confidential discussion regarding arrangements for maintenance of The Ness. Cllr Coleby made a confidential proposal; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting 18:52.

Signed:

8 April 2021